

DOCUMENT:

UCAS 14-19 Diploma Project Findings

Analysis of the first cohort of Diploma applicants and Diploma entry requirements

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Contents

Contents.....	2
1. Executive summary.....	3
2. Introduction	4
3. UCAS Diploma Projects	5
4. Methodology.....	5
5. 14-19 Diploma learners: applicants and accepted applicants.....	6
Applicants.....	6
Acceptances.....	10
Summary of all acceptances.....	10
Courses and qualifications.....	11
Acceptances broken down by Diploma subject	12
Institutions accepting Diploma applicants.....	13
6. 14-19 Diploma entry requirements.....	17
The quality of 14-19 Diploma entry requirements	17
14-19 Diploma acceptability	21
7. Issues identified, conclusions and recommendations	27
Appendix A.....	29
Identifying Diploma applicants	29
Destination of Diploma learners	31
Caveats on data	31
Appendix B.....	33
Methodology for extraction of entry requirement data.....	33
Caveats on entry requirement data	34
Entry requirements quality checking procedure	35
Appendix C	38
Suppression and rounding rules	38



1. Executive summary

- Overall 743 Diploma applicants were identified by UCAS over the 2009 / 2010 application cycle.
- Applications were made by Diploma applicants to over 3,000 courses at more than 160 UCAS member higher education institutions (HEIs) throughout the UK.
- At 30 June 2010, 89% of Diploma applicants had received at least one offer. In comparison, 84% of all UCAS applicants had received at least one offer at this date.
- Overall 68% of Diploma applicants were accepted to a course at a higher education institution by 27 October 2010. For comparison, 70% of all UCAS applicants were accepted to this date.
- Applicants were accepted across all Mission Groups. However, Alliance Universities and Million Plus institutions accepted the highest proportions of Diploma applicants.
- Diploma learners were more likely to apply for higher education courses that were closely aligned to the Principal Learning subjects of their respective Diplomas. In turn, large proportions of Diploma learners were accepted to courses closely linked to Principal Learning subjects.
- The vast majority of Diploma applicants (83%) were accepted to study Honours Degrees.
- Entry requirements presented on Course Search in October 2010 show that over 31,197 courses running in 2011 at 244 higher education institutions would potentially make an offer to a Diploma applicant from at least one Diploma subject.



2. Introduction

The 14-19 Diplomas were introduced in 2008 as part of the wider 14-19 educational reforms. The Advanced Diploma is a two-year full-time qualification for young people aged 16 and over. It offers a blend of theoretical and practical learning and allows students to study in work-related settings, both real and simulated. It has been developed with employers and universities to provide students with an in-depth understanding of the sector related to their chosen Diploma.¹

More generally, the Coalition Government has made clear its commitment to improve the quality of vocational education and has asked Alison Wolf to carry out an independent review. The review which will include Diplomas was launched on 9 September 2010, and will conclude in early 2011. The review will consider how to improve vocational education for 14 – 19 year olds and thereby promote successful progression into the labour market and into higher level education and training routes, taking explicit account of good practice in a selection of developed economies.

¹ For the official statistics release on participation and achievements of Diploma learners, please see "DfE: Diploma Learning, England, 2009/10" www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000967/index.shtml



3. UCAS Diploma Projects

From March 2008 until November 2010, the Department for Education (formerly the Department for Children, Schools and Families) provided funding for UCAS to host two projects that ensured UCAS and the higher education (HE) sector became engaged with the 14-19 Diploma qualification. These projects were the Diploma Data Tracking project and the Diploma Data project.

1) The aims of the Diploma Data Tracking project were as follows:

- To identify the first cohort of Diploma applicants in order to analyse trends in their applications as they applied to HE during the 2009 / 2010 UCAS application cycle.
- To explore the experiences of Diploma learners when applying to HE, in order to identify barriers to progression and aid their removal.
- To analyse the movements of Diploma learners over the 2010 Confirmation and Clearing period.
- To analyse the destination of successful applicants at HE.

2) The aims of the Diploma Data project were as follows:

- To raise the awareness about the 14 - 19 Diploma amongst HE admissions staff throughout the UK.
- To encourage Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to supply UCAS with entry requirements, to demonstrate whether students applying with the qualification would be accepted to their institution on a course-by-course basis.

This report summarises the main findings of these projects, including the initial acceptability of the 14-19 Diploma across UK HEIs and the progression routes of successful Diploma applicants now in higher education.

4. Methodology

For a more details on how the data included in this report was extracted, and for caveats on the data incorporated within this report, please see Appendices A and B. For suppression and rounding rules for statistics enclosed in this report please see Appendix C.

5. 14-19 Diploma learners: applicants and accepted applicants

Applicants

As at 10 August 2010, UCAS identified a total cohort of 743 Advanced and Progression Diploma applicants.² Applicants resided throughout England and made applications to UCAS member HEIs throughout the UK.

Applicants were grouped by Diploma subject as follows:

Table 1: Number of Advanced and Progression Diploma applicants grouped by Diploma³

Diploma subject	Number of identified Advanced and Progression Diploma learners making an application to UCAS by 10 August 2010
Construction and the Built Environment (and a small number of applicants with “unknown” Diploma subjects ⁴)	75
Creative and Media	229
Engineering	144
IT	130
Society, Health and Development	165
Grand Total	743

² Please see Appendix A for methodology in how Diploma applicants were identified and a caveat on the data.

³ Please see Appendix C for suppression and rounding rules.

⁴ “Unknown” refers to those applicants identified with a Diploma, although the Diploma subject had not been specified on their UCAS application form.

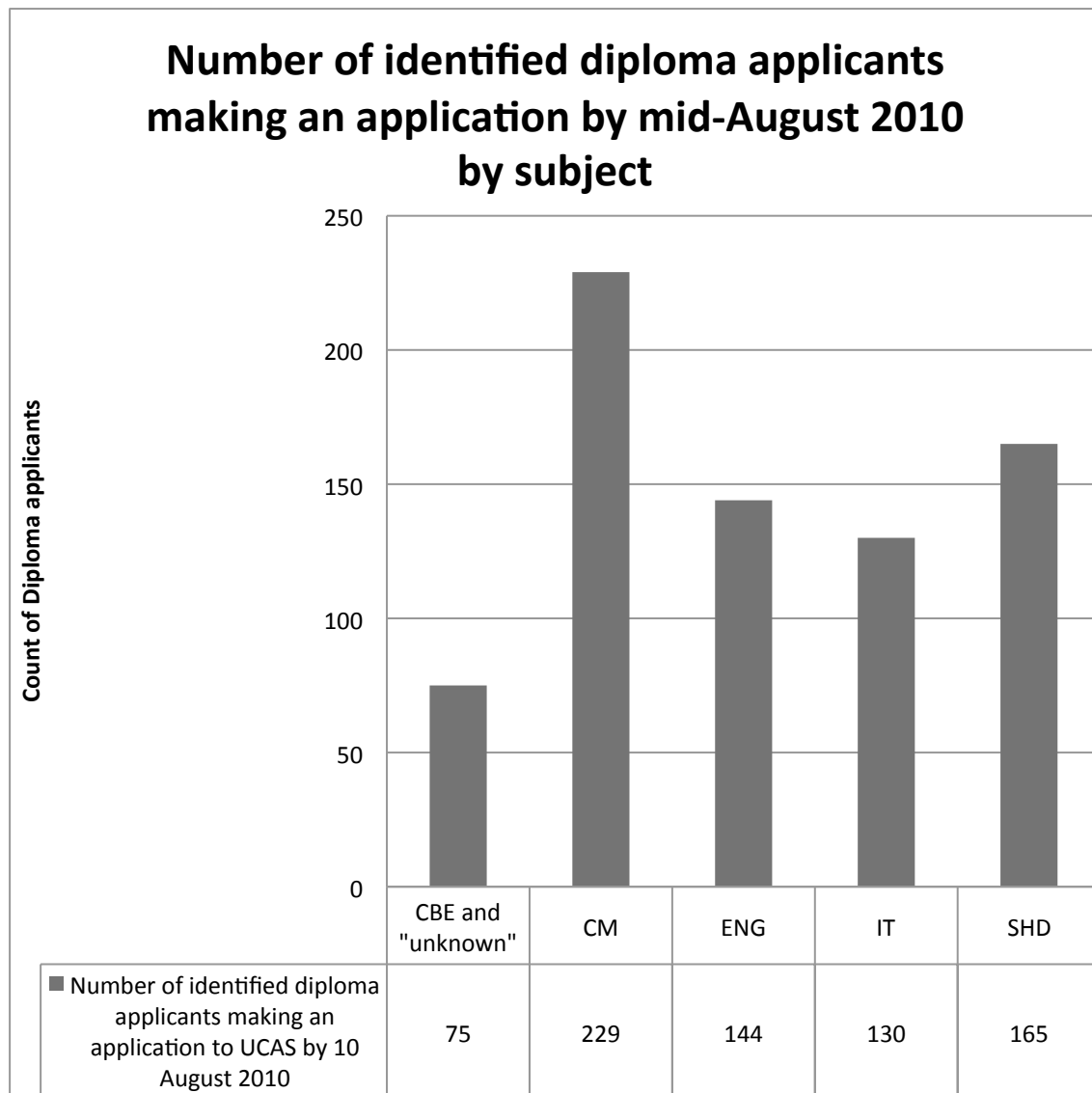


Figure 1: Number of identified Advanced and Progression Diploma applicants as at 10 August 2010

The graph demonstrates that there were smaller numbers of Construction and the Built Environment (and “unknown”) applicants compared with the number of applicants undertaking Diplomas in Creative & Media, Engineering, IT, and Society, Health and Development.

Applicants applied to study an array of courses at HEIs throughout the UK. As at 30 June 2010, 700 Diploma applicants had been identified.⁵ This cohort of applicants had made applications to over 3,000 courses at over 160 different HEIs throughout the UK.

⁵ See methodology in Appendix A for more information.

Applications were made across Mission Groups; applications were received by the Russell Group, 1994 Group, Alliance Universities and Million Plus institutions.⁶ The proportion of applications made by Diploma learners to each Mission Group is displayed in the chart below:

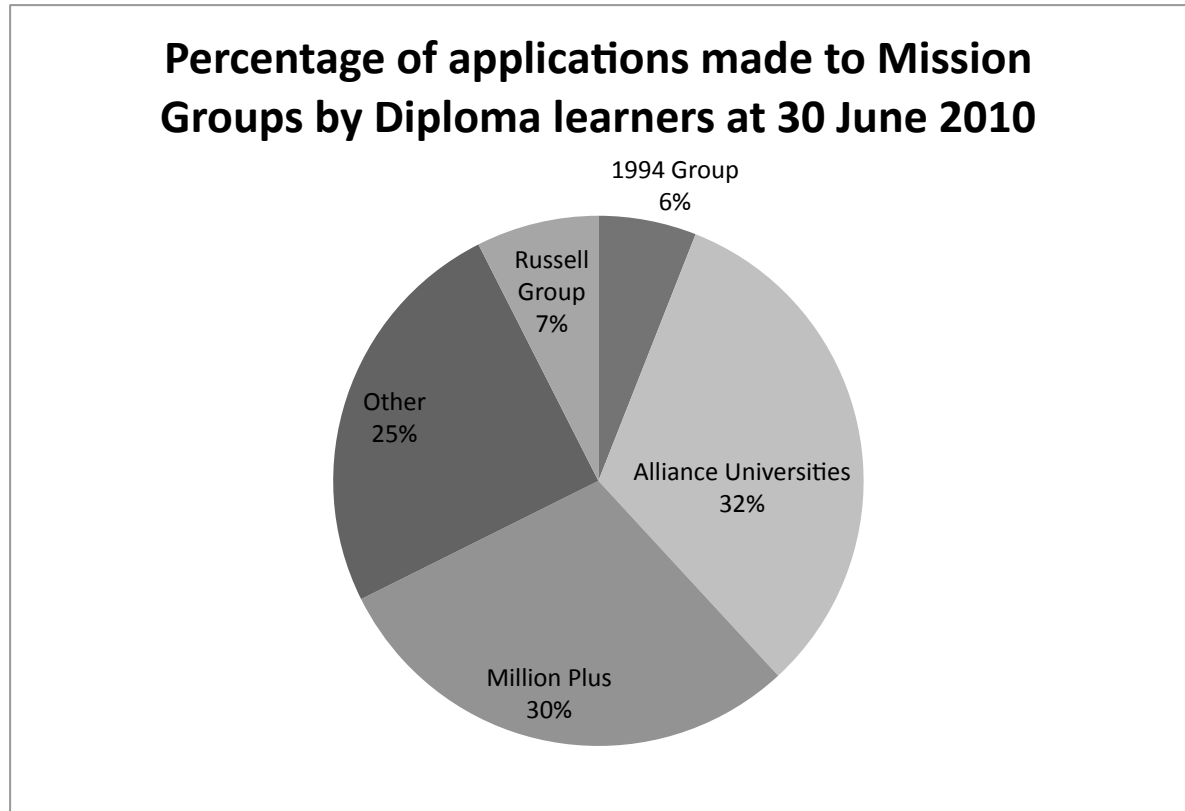


Figure 2: Percentage of applications made to each Mission Group by Diploma learners at 30 June 2010.

Alliance and Million Plus institutions received large proportions of the total number of applications from Diploma learners.

⁶ Mission Groups are groups of higher education institutions with common aims and values. For further information on the different groups please visit their websites:

Russell: www.russellgroup.ac.uk/

1994 Group: www.1994group.ac.uk/

Million Plus: www.millionplus.ac.uk/

University Alliance: www.university-alliance.ac.uk/



The most popular subjects at HE for which Diploma applicants applied were as follows:

Table 2: Most popular subject areas receiving applications from Diploma learners at 30 June 2010

Diploma subject	Subject area at HE for which Diploma applicants applied
Construction & the Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building • Architecture • Civil engineering
Creative & Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design studies • Media studies • Cinematics and photography
Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanical engineering • Electronic and electrical engineering • Civil engineering
IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer science • Information systems • Software engineering
Society, Health and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing • Social work • Teacher Training

Diploma applicants appeared to favour courses which have strong links with the Principal Learning element of their respective Diplomas.

However, Diploma applicants also applied for subjects that were not related to Principal Learning such as degree courses in the humanities. The majority of Diploma applicants applied to study honours degree programmes.

The most popular Additional and Specialist Learning (ASL) held by Diploma applicants was an A level, however BTEC qualifications and more vocationally aligned qualifications were also popular.⁷

At 30 June 2010, 89% of Diploma applicants had received at least one offer. In comparison, 84% of all UCAS applicants had received at least one offer at this date.

⁷ The end of year data sets for qualification information are currently being finalised for the application cycle 2009/2010. Therefore if any further information regarding ASLs held by Diploma applicants is required, please contact the UCAS Statistics Team (statistics@ucas.ac.uk) for bespoke analysis under separate agreements.

Acceptances

Summary of all acceptances

At 27 October 2010, 503 Diploma applicants had been accepted onto a course at HE representing approximately 68% of the total cohort of identified Diploma applicants.⁸ These students had successfully met the terms of their offer and thus secured a place at an HEI. In comparison, approximately 70% of all UCAS applicants had been accepted to a course at HE by this date.

Other interesting points to note include:

- 288 of the 503 accepted Diploma applicants (57%) were accepted on the basis of UCAS Tariff point offers
- 21 Diploma applicants (4% of accepted Diploma applicants) were accepted with an “Unconditional” offer.

The schemes through which applicants were accepted were as follows:

Table 3: Scheme through which UCAS Diploma applicants were accepted.

Scheme	Number of applicants accepted	% of accepted applicants
Main UCAS scheme	412	82%
Extra	9	2%
Clearing	82	16%
Total	503	100

The majority of Diploma applicants (82%) were accepted through the main UCAS scheme. In comparison 70% of all UCAS applications were accepted through the main scheme.

⁸ See methodology in Appendix A for the significance of this date.



Courses and qualifications

Diploma applicants were accepted to a variety of courses at HE. The breakdown of acceptances to degree programmes are displayed in the table below:

Table 4: course / qualification type for which Diploma applicants were accepted at higher education

Course/qualification type	Number of accepted applicants	Percentage of all accepted applicants
Diplomas in Nursing and/or Midwifery	19	4%
Foundation Degree and Foundation Years	50	10%
Honours Degree	416	83%
HND, HNC or Diploma of HE	18	4%
Grand total	503	

The vast majority of Diploma applicants (83%) were accepted to study honours degrees.

Subjects Diploma applicants were accepted to study were as follows:

Table 5: Subject areas at HE accepting the highest number of applicants by Diploma subject

Diploma subject	Most popular subject area at HE accepting Diploma applicants
Construction & the Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building • Architecture • Planning (Urban, Rural and Regional)
Creative & Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Studies • Cinematics and Photography • Media Studies
Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanical Engineering • General Engineering • Electronic and Electrical Engineering
IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer Science • Information Systems • Software Engineering
Society, Health and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing • Social Work • Academic studies in Education



Acceptances broken down by Diploma subject

The following table demonstrates the number and percentage of Diploma learners that were accepted at HE broken down by Diploma subject:

Table 6: Diploma applicant acceptances at 27 October broken down by Diploma subject

Diploma subject	Number of identified diploma applicants making an application to UCAS by mid-August 2010	Number accepted Diploma applicants at 27 October 2010	% of applicants accepted by Diploma Subject
Construction & Built Environment (and a small number of applicants with “unknown” Diploma subjects ⁹)	75	49	65%
Creative & Media	229	151	66%
Engineering	144	108	75%
IT	130	88	68%
Society, Health & Development	165	107	65%
Grand total	743	503	68%

The percentage of accepted Diploma applicants varied between Diploma subjects. A higher proportion of Engineering applicants were accepted than Society, Health and Development applicants, for example.

We can speculate as to why this could be.

- A higher proportion of Engineering acceptances could be linked to the relative popularity of the courses for which these students applied. Subjects allied to engineering received fewer applications through the main UCAS scheme compared with subjects allied to social work for example. This could suggest that competition for courses linked to engineering may have been less fierce, allowing for more applicants to be accepted. There may also be a correlation linked to the additional funding supplied to STEM subjects.
- Crucially, the proportion of accepted applicants is dependent on the ability of the candidate to meet the terms of their offer. Engineering students were able to meet the terms of their offers more successfully than other Diploma applicants.

⁹ “Unknown” refers to those applicants identified with a Diploma, although the Diploma subject had not been specified on their UCAS application form.



Institutions accepting Diploma applicants

Applicants were accepted at all Mission Groups¹⁰ across the UK, including the Russell and 1994 Group institutions. The table and graph below demonstrate the number and percentage of applicants accepted within each Mission Group.

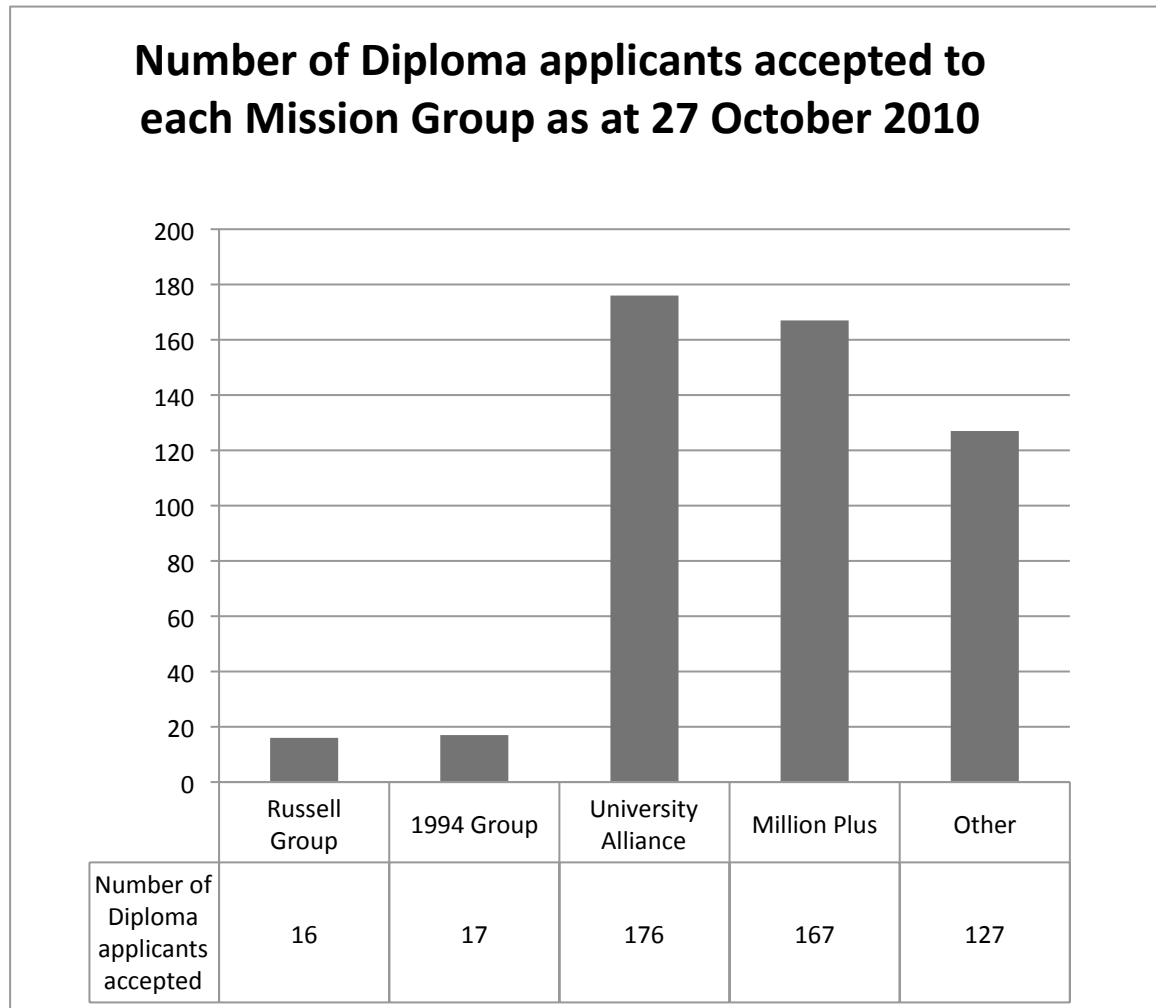


Figure 3: Number of Diploma applicants accepted to each Mission Group at 27 October 2010

¹⁰ Mission Groups are groups of higher education institutions with common aims and values. For further information on the different groups please visit their websites:

Russell: www.russellgroup.ac.uk/

1994 Group: www.1994group.ac.uk/

Million Plus: www.millionplus.ac.uk/

University Alliance: www.university-alliance.ac.uk/



Table 7: Number and percentage of Diploma applicants accepted by Mission Group

Mission Group	Number of Diploma applicants accepted	Percentage of Diploma applicants accepted	Percentage of all UCAS applicants accepted
Russell Group	16	3%	3%
1994 Group	17	3%	7%
University Alliance	176	35%	9%
Million Plus	167	33%	15%
Other ¹¹	127	25%	66%
Total	503	100%	100%

The Alliance and Million Plus institutions accepted the largest proportions of Diploma applicants. This follows a similar trend to all accepted UCAS applicants. Higher proportions of all UCAS applicants were accepted to Million Plus and University Alliance institutions in comparison to Russell and 1994 Group institutions.

We can speculate as to why higher proportions Diploma applicants were accepted to Million Plus and University Alliance institutions. The following graph and table demonstrate the proportion of applications received by Mission Groups at 30 June 2010, and the proportion of offers supplied to these applicants at this date.

¹¹ "Other" refers to any UCAS member institutions that are not members of the mission groups mentioned.

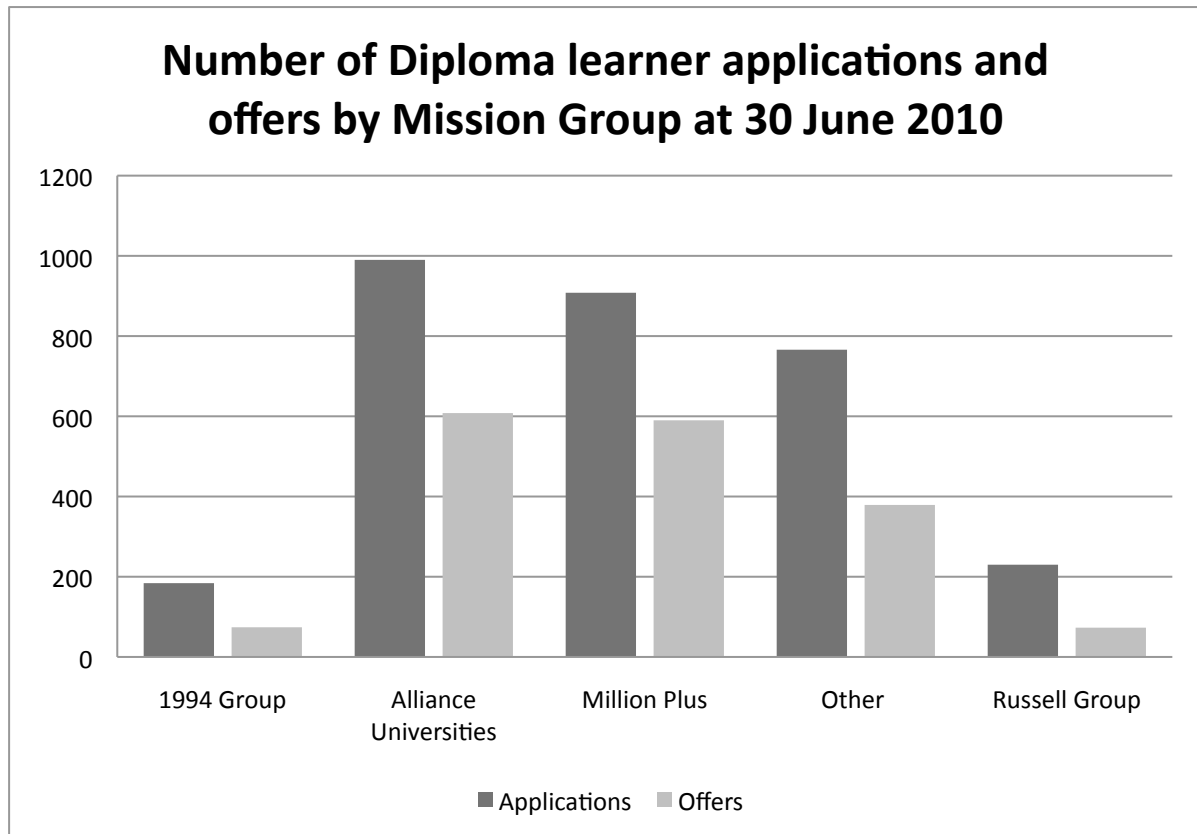


Figure 4: Number of Diploma learner applications and offers broken down by Mission Group at 30 June 2010

Table 8: Number and proportion of applications and offers broken down by Mission Group at 30 June 2010

Mission Group	Number of Diploma learner choices ¹²	Percentage of all Diploma applications	Number of offers supplied from each Mission Group	Percentage of choices receiving an offer within each Mission Group
Russell Group	230	7%	73	32%
1994 Group	184	6%	74	40%
Alliance Universities	990	30%	608	61%
Million Plus	908	30%	590	65%
Other	766	25%	379	49%

- Alliance and Million Plus institutions received the majority of all Diploma learners' applications. These institutions were also more likely to supply offers to Diploma applicants; a higher percentage of offers were made to Diploma applications compared to the Russell and 1994 Group institutions. This

¹² A choice is one course for which an applicant has applied to at a specific university; students can make up to 5 choices in one UCAS application.



contributes to the likelihood that a higher proportion of Diploma learners would be accepted by these institutions.

- To be “accepted” the Diploma applicant had to meet the terms of their offer supplied by the institution. Diploma applicants who had applied to Alliance and Million Plus institutions were most likely to meet the terms of their offer.
- Interestingly, Alliance Universities and Million Plus institutions made the majority of their Diploma offers based on the achievement of UCAS Tariff points. Speculatively, Tariff offers may be more flexible to accommodate achievements of Diploma learners because a certain number of Tariff points can be obtained from the standalone component qualifications such as Principal Learning or the ASL qualification.

6. 14-19 Diploma entry requirements

The main aim of this aspect of the project was to raise awareness of the qualification with HE admissions staff and to improve the quality of entry requirement data, so that Diploma learners would have clear information and guidance on their possible progression routes into HE.

The quality of 14-19 Diploma entry requirements

All 14-19 Diploma entry requirement data for courses running in 2011 was extracted from web-link in March 2010¹³. Quality checks were then completed on this information.¹⁴ These checks were carried out in order to pinpoint where there were misunderstandings surrounding the qualification and to develop and implement appropriate strategies to address these.

Quality checks were completed by UCAS to assess the clarity of all 14-19 Diploma entry requirements; each UCAS member institution was given a quality rating on a scale of 1-4. This scale is as follows:

1. No Diploma entry requirements provided for any courses
2. Entry requirements are confusing or incomplete
3. Entry requirements are understandable, but could have more detail
4. Entry requirements are clear and detailed

The overall quality for the 301 institutions checked was as follows¹⁵:

Table 9: The quality of entry requirements for each UCAS member institution as of March 2010

Quality Rating	March 2010	
	No. of HEIs	% of HEIs
1	48	16
2	32	11
3	189	62
4	32	11

Whilst the majority of institutions had understandable entry requirements and only 16% had no entries at all, it was apparent that many HEIs still required further

¹³ Web-link is used by HEIs “to view applicant data and update course and institution data. It is reached directly through an internet connection, giving ... the most up-to-date access to both...applicants and ...courses from a single log-on point” (www.ucas.com/he_staff/ucas-link/) please see Appendix B for more information regarding the extraction of entry requirement data.

¹⁴ Please see Appendix B for full quality-checking procedure.

¹⁵ Please note that these figures are an estimation, as quality is subject to interpretation.

assistance to ensure that entry requirement information presented for their courses on web-link was clear and detailed.

The following graph explores the size of institutions in relation to the quality of their entry requirements in March 2010.

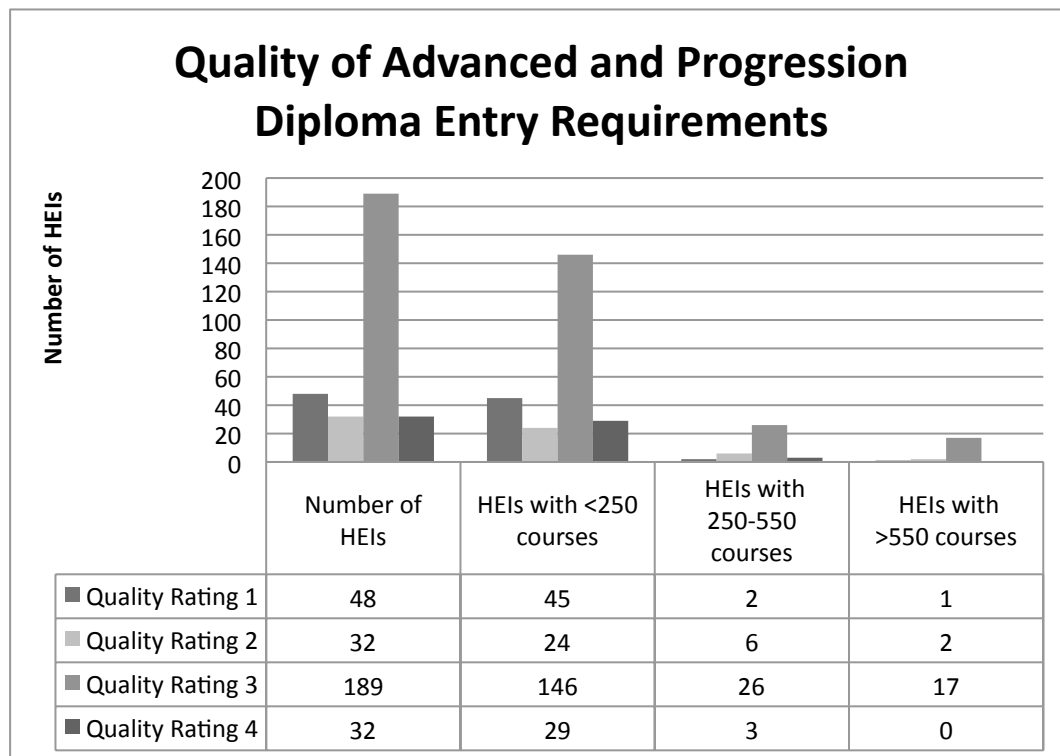


Figure 5: The quality of Diploma entry requirements in comparison to institution size in March 2010

As shown, the majority of HEIs with a rating of 1 (no Diploma entry requirements for any courses) have under 250 courses. Smaller institutions may have seen little incentive to complete entry requirements for the qualification, as many of these offer specialist courses which they may have felt were outside of the scope of the Diploma subject areas.

Other reasons for institutions having no entry requirements, or supplying incomplete information could be due to confusion about the structure and content of the award. The main misunderstandings identified through checking entry requirements, were with Tariff points, the type of acceptability specified and Additional and Specialist Learning requirements. The entry requirements inputted relating to these aspects of

the award often did not make sense, or did not correspond to further requirements specified.

Numerous strategies were employed over the following months, in order to address these issues, such as:

- The creation of a best practice guide on updating 14-19 Diploma entry requirements. This was published on the UCAS website in September 2010 on the following page:
www.ucas.com/he_staff/curriculumandquals/14-19diplomas
- A UCAS Diploma event was held in London on 5 October 2010, to offer HE admissions staff information and advice on the qualification and the UCAS processes involved with it (such as completing entry requirements and making offers)
- Visits to HEIs were conducted to explain the qualification and resolve individual issues with entry requirements
- Spreadsheets of entry requirements were sent to individual HEIs, highlighting their specific misunderstandings with the qualification and offering bespoke advice in order to improve these
- Communications were sent, in the UCAS weekly bulletin and emails, offering assistance and information on the qualification.

The level of quality in October 2010 compared to March 2010 is as follows:

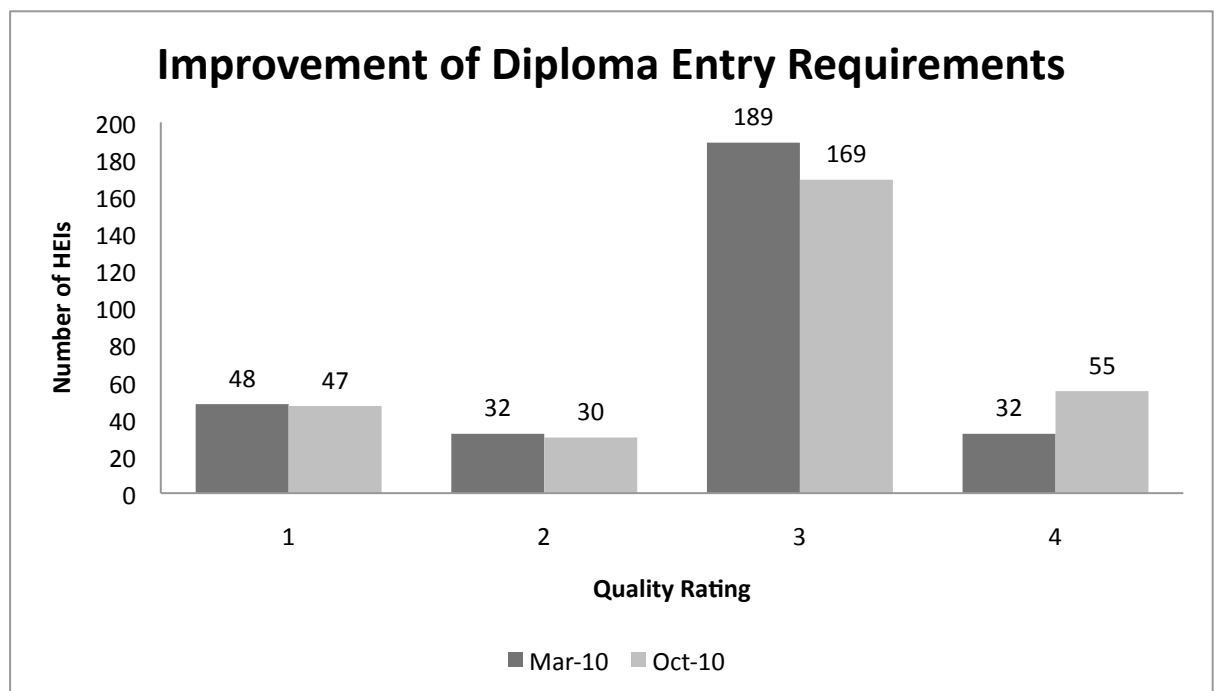




Figure 6: The improvement of Diploma entry requirements from March 2010 to October 2010

As of October 2010, the number of institutions with a rating of 4 (clear and detailed entry requirements) has dramatically risen from 32 to 55. There has been a slight decrease in the number of HEIs with a rating of 3 (understandable entry requirements), however the majority of those institutions moving from a rating of 3 have moved to a rating of 4, suggesting further improvements to the quality of their entry requirements. There has also been a small decrease in the number of HEIs with no entries or incomplete or confusing requirements.

It is apparent however that further assistance will need to be given to those institutions with no Diploma entry requirements, in order to ensure that future Diploma learners are aware of their options before applying.



14-19 Diploma acceptability¹⁶

The following tables and graphs document the acceptance of the 14-19 Advanced Diploma for entry to courses in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Please note: The figures for acceptability in 2012 are not indicative of the general acceptability of any of the Diploma subjects for the 2012 cycle. Due to on-going changes within the education sector, many institutions may review the number of courses running in 2012 at a later date. Therefore entry requirements are subject to change later in the application cycle. There is also the possibility of changes to admissions policies that could affect the Diploma acceptance in 2012¹⁷.

¹⁶ Please see Appendix B for caveat on this data.

¹⁷ Please see methodology in Appendix B for more information regarding 2012 data



		No. of Courses Accepting			% of Courses Accepting			
	Year course running	2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012	
	Total number of courses	39162	40999	41121				
	At least one Diploma subject accepted	28207	31197	31365	72	76	76	
Diploma subject	Phase 1 Diploma subjects	Creative and Media	25108	26691	26963	64	65	66
		IT	25241	26584	26878	64	65	65
		Engineering	25963	27461	27677	66	67	67
		Construction and Built Environment	24704	25863	26141	63	63	64
		Society Health and Development	24960	26306	26578	64	64	65
	Phase 2 Diploma subject	Environmental and Land-Based Studies	N/A	17476	17961	N/A	43	44
		Manufacturing and Product Design	N/A	17400	17900	N/A	42	44
		Hospitality	N/A	15690	16179	N/A	39	39
		Hair and Beauty Studies	N/A	15069	15552	N/A	37	38
		Business, Administration and Finance	N/A	17565	18061	N/A	43	44
	Phase 3 Diploma subjects	Public Services	N/A	N/A	52	N/A	N/A	-
		Travel and Tourism	N/A	N/A	50	N/A	N/A	-
		Sport and Active Leisure	N/A	N/A	52	N/A	N/A	-
		Retail Business	N/A	N/A	53	N/A	N/A	-

Table 10: Number of courses accepting Advanced Diploma (as of October 20th 2010)¹⁸

¹⁸ Negligible percentages which are greater than 0 but less than 0.5, and which would therefore be rounded to 0, are replaced with -. Please see Appendix C for all rules on suppression and rounding of statistics.

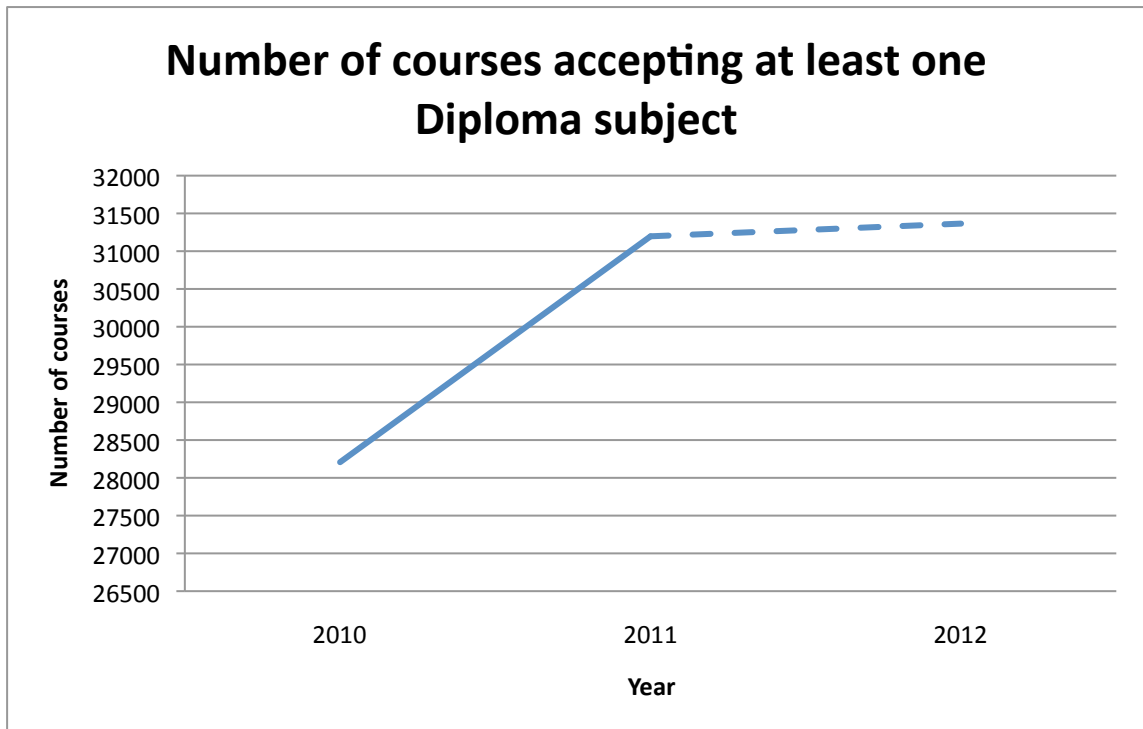


Figure 7: Number of courses accepting Advanced Diploma (as of 20 October 2010)



Table 11: Number of HEIs accepting Advanced Diploma (as of 20 October 2010)

		Year	No. of Institutions Accepting Advanced Diploma			% of Institutions Accepting Advanced Diploma		
			2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012
		Total number of HEIs	305	301	304			
		At least one Diploma subject	229	244	240	75	81	80
Diploma subject	Phase 1 Diploma subjects	Creative and Media	209	219	215	69	73	71
		IT	207	214	210	68	71	69
		Engineering	199	212	210	65	70	69
		Construction and Built Environment	197	206	204	65	68	67
		Society Health and Development	201	210	207	66	70	68
	Phase 2 Diploma subjects	Environmental and Land-Based Studies	N/A	155	153	N/A	51	50
		Manufacturing and Product Design	N/A	152	152	N/A	50	50
		Hospitality	N/A	141	138	N/A	47	45
		Hair and Beauty Studies	N/A	135	132	N/A	45	43
		Business, Administration and Finance	N/A	165	163	N/A	55	54
	Phase 3 Diploma subjects	Public Services	N/A	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	2
		Travel and Tourism	N/A	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	2
		Sport and Active Leisure	N/A	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	2
		Retail Business	N/A	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	2

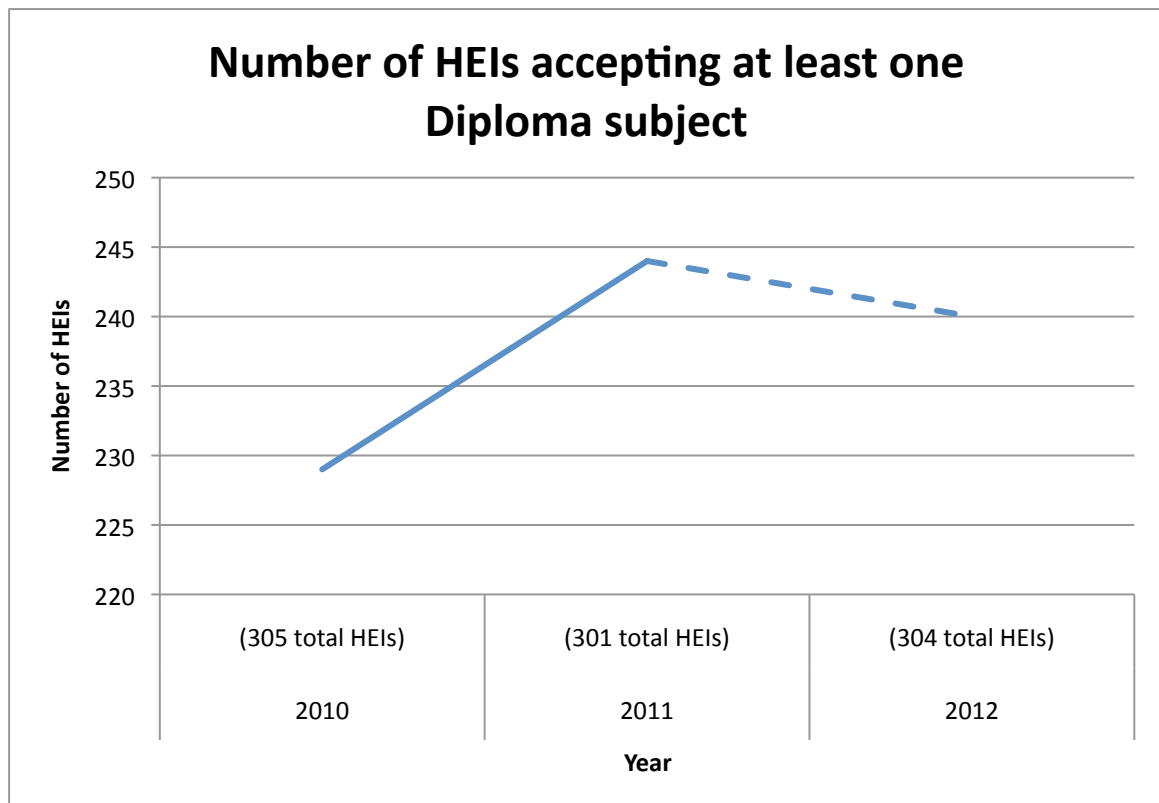


Figure 8: Number of HEIs accepting Advanced Diploma (as of 20 October 2010)

As shown in both sets of tables and graphs above, there has been a steady increase in the number of courses accepting the Diploma from 2010 to 2012 and a large increase in the number of HEIs accepting a Diploma from 2010 to 2011. This trend can be seen across all Diploma subjects. This could be owing to the 14-19 Diploma gaining credibility and establishing itself as a suitable qualification for progression to HE.

There has been a slight decrease in the number of HEIs accepting the Diploma from 2011 to 2012. However this could be because new UCAS members have not updated their entry requirements for 2012 this early in the cycle.

Engineering is the Diploma subject accepted by the highest number of courses and Creative and Media is accepted by the most HEIs; this is a notable feature across all years.

The phase 3 Diploma subjects were added to web-link in early October. At this time (when the data was extracted), very few HEIs would have updated their entry requirements for 2012 courses. Therefore the uptake for phase 3 seems low and



there is little change in the figures from 2011 to 2012. However, it is positive that over 50 courses at five different HEIs are already accepting a phase 3 Diploma after only one week of their addition to web-link.

The phase 1 Diploma subjects have a higher acceptability rate than phase 2 or 3. This could be due to the time-consuming nature of updating entry requirements for phases 2 and 3. Many institutions were reluctant to complete entry requirements for these Diploma subjects when a small cohort of applicants was expected in the 2010 application cycle.

There has also been a degree of uncertainty over the longevity of the Diploma, due to the recent changes to the roll-out of the qualification. This may have discouraged HEIs from updating the Diploma entry requirements.



7. Issues identified, conclusions and recommendations

Through conducting the Diploma Data Tracking project, a number of issues were identified for 14-19 Diploma students as they applied to HE. These included:

- A lack of guidance regarding how to complete the Apply system accurately
- A lack of guidance about which ASLs would be appropriate to study to progress to particular HE courses
- Variations in the quality of offers; the conditions of some offers were unclear
- Some HEI faculty staff did not understand the qualification
- There were a series of issues surrounding the presentation of results over Confirmation and Clearing particularly in understanding whether students had met the terms of their offers
- Confusion over Tariff points allocated to the award.

As a result of the Diploma Data project which aimed to raise awareness of the Diploma with HE admissions staff, it became apparent that there were difficulties with engaging HEIs with the Diploma qualification. Feedback collected from HEIs indicated that this could be due to the following:

- Confusion over the structure, purpose and content of the group award.
- Lack of clarity about the viable progression routes for students undertaking the Diploma.
- The time consuming nature of updating entry requirements because there were many factors to consider (for example, acceptability of separate component parts, Tariff points allocated to the award, checking the validity of ASLs required).
- The calibre of the students was unknown.
- The small number of potential applicants meant that a disproportionate amount of time and resource would be needed to update entry requirements at HEIs.
- Uncertainty about the credibility and longevity of the award.

Although these issues were identified, the work of UCAS intended to remedy some of these problems for future applicants and HE staff.



Best practice guides relating to completing Apply accurately, making offers and updating entry requirements have been published on the UCAS website¹⁹ to assist with these processes.

Although there were difficulties for the first cohort of students, the overall progress of these applicants has been positive. Acceptance rates of Diploma applicants are similar to the acceptance rates of all UCAS applicants, and as indicated by entry requirements (correct as of October 2010), large percentages of HEIs would potentially accept a Diploma learner over the coming application cycle.

¹⁹ Diploma guides can be accessed on the following pages:
www.ucas.com/he_staff/curriculumandquals/14-19diplomas
www.ucas.com/students/applying/howtoapply/education/quals
www.ucas.com/advisers/guides/



Appendix A

Identifying Diploma applicants

The following documents the method employed to initially identify a credible cohort of Progression or Advanced Diploma applicants.

Applicants include those Diploma learners who have submitted an application to UCAS during the 2009 / 2010 application cycle. Thus not all Diploma learners at level 3 are identified within this report, only those making an application to UCAS. Diploma applicants are resident in England, making applications to higher education institutions throughout the UK. HEIs within this report are universities and colleges that are UCAS members only.

The cohort of credible Advanced and Progression Diploma applicants was extracted from the UCAS database that stores all UCAS applications by applying progressively more stringent filters to the qualification entries made by applicants when completing an application to UCAS.

Filters were applied to identify those applicants who were most likely to have applied with an Advanced or Progression Diploma, because they had all the following features:

- they had entered a qualification of either an “Advanced Diploma ” or “Progression Diploma” **and**
- had entered a subject or course text, specifically of :
 - "Creative & Media"
 - "IT"
 - "Construction & Built Environment"
 - "Engineering"
 - "Society, Health & Development"
- **and**, because 2010 was the first awarding of the Diploma the applicant had not indicated that they had already achieved such qualification **and**
- entered an awarding body as one of
 - “Edexcel”,
 - “AQA”,
 - "OCR",



- "AQA/OCR".

These applicants were identified, and the assumption made that the selected cohort represented the Advanced or Progression Diploma applicants.

Using these filters, 769 potential Diploma applicants were identified as at 30 June 2010. However, due to the variations in applications and offers made, it was clear that the dataset needed to be scrutinized more carefully to establish accurately who within this cohort had applied with an Advanced or Progression Diploma.

To do this, UCAS manually explored the records of all 769 assumed Diploma applicants on the UCAS database, to identify with more assurance those students applying with the award.

To do this UCAS employed the following methods:

- 1) The qualifications (results pending) section of the application form was explored to see if the student had entered any or any combination of the following qualifications which could be considered as part of the Diploma:
 - a) Progression Diploma
 - b) Advanced Diploma
 - c) Principal Learning
 - d) Extended Project
 - e) Functional Skills
 - f) one or more qualifications which could be considered as ASL eg A level.

- 2) If any of these qualifications were identified, other aspects of the application were then explored further to confirm whether these students had applied with a 14-19 Diploma:
 - a) The student's personal statement was explored to see if any activities were described that clearly related to the 14-19 Diploma eg 'Extended Project'
 - b) The teacher's reference was also explored to see if any language was used that was clearly related to the 14-19 Diploma eg 'Principal Learning', 'Extended Project'.

Following the above procedures, a cohort of 700 Diploma applicants was identified as of 30 June 2010.



In addition, UCAS took part in a data matching exercise with Edexcel in early August 2010 to identify any Diploma applicants that had not been selected using the original methodology outlined above.

Edexcel had a large proportion of Diploma learners registered to complete level 3 14-19 Diplomas in the summer of 2010. Edexcel approached UCAS to identify those registered learners who had also made an application to UCAS to facilitate support strategies in centres over Confirmation and Clearing. An additional 43 Diploma applicants were identified as a result of this work. Therefore in total, UCAS identified 743 Diploma applicants over the 2009 – 2010 application cycle.

Destination of Diploma learners

To monitor the profile of those Diploma applicants who were successful in securing a place at HE, the records of the identified cohort of 743 Diploma applicants were explored. Records were scrutinised through querying the UCAS database that holds UCAS applications, to identify the following:

- the number of Diploma applicants who had been accepted
- the institution where the applicant had been accepted
- the course title and subject type
- the type of degree the applicant had been accepted to study.

This data was extracted from the database on 27 October 2010. This is significant because at this date, all applicants still eligible for Clearing had been “rejected by default” and all those students with confirmation decisions outstanding had been “rejected by default”. In effect, all applicants, including all Diploma applicants, successful in securing a place at HE were known at this point.

The following findings are therefore based upon those applicants who were initially identified as Diploma applicants using the methodology above, and after exploring the applicant records of those that had been accepted to HE at 27 October 2010.

Caveats on data

The report analyses only the destinations of *identified* Diploma applicants. Identified Diploma applicants have been selected using the methodology outlined above. The methodology relies on students inputting their Advanced or Progression Diploma qualification to meet a specific set of criteria before they will be selected as a Diploma applicant. It is possible therefore that some applicants who have applied

with a Diploma this year will not have been identified and monitored throughout this project.

In addition, the judgement as to whether a student had made an application with an Advanced or a Progression Diploma was to some extent a subjective decision made by UCAS, which may be open to human error.



Appendix B

Methodology for extraction of entry requirement data

This Appendix documents the method employed to identify the number of courses and institutions accepting any of the fourteen Diploma subjects available to students.

A report (report 1) was established in October 2009 to extract data from web-link²⁰, in order to provide statistics on the acceptability of phases 1 and 2 Diploma subjects. This data extraction included all entry requirements presented for the qualification (including no entries) for all UCAS member institutions. This report was updated in October 2010 to include the phase 3 Diploma subjects, which were made available on web-link on 10 October 2010.

A formula was applied to the data, in order to provide statistics on acceptability. This ensured that:

- if at least one Diploma subject was selected as accepted according to a controlled text box on web-link, the course and institution would be listed as accepting the Diploma
- then, if no Diploma subjects were accepted according to the controlled text box, but the Diploma was listed as “Acceptable on its own”, “Acceptable on its own or in combination”, or “Acceptable only when combined”, the course and institution would be listed as accepting the Diploma
- then, if no subjects, no acceptability or “not accepted” was listed then the course would be listed as not accepting the Diploma.

Within the data extracted in report 1 for the 14-19 Diplomas, filters could be applied in order to analyse different aspects of acceptability, such as:

- the acceptability of different Diploma subjects
- the acceptability in different entry years (2010, 2011 and 2012)
- the acceptability of Progression and Advanced Diplomas
- the acceptability of courses at a specific institution.

The figures provided in this final summary are based on the acceptability of the Advanced Diploma.

²⁰ Web-link is used by HEIs “to view applicant data and update course and institution data. It is reached directly through an internet connection, giving ... the most up-to-date access to both...applicants and ...courses from a single log-on point” (www.ucas.com/he_staff/ucas-link/)



The data within report 1 could be refreshed to extract the content of web-link at that time. Therefore, figures provided in these findings are based on the acceptability of the Advanced Diploma at the time when data was last extracted (October 2010).

Caveats on entry requirement data

There are certain limitations to the formula used within report 1 to extract Diploma acceptability data:

- Some institutions may have listed a course as “not accepting”, but accidentally specified a Diploma subject from the controlled text box. Therefore this course would be listed as accepting, when there is a possibility that it may not be.
- As it is difficult to analyse free text, there were no filters placed on this data. There is the possibility that a course may be accepting a Diploma, as specified in the free text, but they may not have specified this within the Diploma subject controlled text box or acceptability field. Therefore the course would be listed as not accepting the Diploma, when it may be.

In order to work out the percentage of courses and institutions accepting a Diploma for 2010, 2011 and 2012, the total number of courses and HEIs presented on web-link for each separate year was calculated from report 1. However, there are certain issues surrounding the final totals of courses and HEIs:

- The total number of UCAS member institutions can change each year, as various mergers and cancellations of membership take place. Therefore the total number of HEIs obtained from web-link at the beginning of a cycle may change slightly by the end. The total figure shown in table 11 represents only the data at the time of extraction (ie October 2010).
- The total number of running and publishable courses obtained from web-link can be only an estimate of the number of courses that students have applied to or that were available for application during the course of the particular cycle, as courses can be discontinued, suspended or set to be ‘not for publication’ at any point within a cycle. The total figure shown in table 10 is also only representative of what is shown for that year at the time of extraction (i.e. October 2010).



The figures for acceptability in 2012 are not indicative of the general acceptability of any of the Diploma subjects for the complete 2012 cycle. The phase 3 Diploma subjects were added to web-link only in early October and at the time of the data extraction, very few HEIs would have updated entry requirements for 2012 courses.

Additionally, due to on-going changes within the education sector, many institutions may review the number of courses running in 2012 at a later date. Therefore entry requirements are subject to change later in the application cycle. There is also the possibility of changes to admissions policies that could affect the Diploma acceptance in 2012.

Entry requirements quality checking procedure

When completing quality checks on entry requirements, the data from report 1 was filtered to isolate each specific institution and then analysed in full (ie showing all subjects, all free text, all 2010 and 2011 courses, and both Progression and Advanced Diploma entry requirements for that HEI) to establish an overall quality rating.

The following documents the procedure used by UCAS when assessing the quality of entry requirements on web-link for the Diploma, for each HEI.

General

- Spell check.
- Subjects should have capital letter.
- “A level”, “grade”.
- “One to nine” and “10 +”.
- Full stops at end of sentences.

Tariff score

- Check that numbers are entered smallest to largest.
- Check Tariff corresponds to diploma grades/points required for course entry.
- Points should end with a “0” (check website/with institution if ambiguous figure entered).
- Review and flag Tariff scores that are not consistent with other equivalent qualifications.

Acceptability



- Check that acceptability corresponds to any free text entered.
- **“On its own”**
 - For Advanced Diploma: one A level or equivalent required (should be specified in ASL Subject box).
 - For Progression Diploma: No A level or equivalent required
- **“On its own or in combination”**
 - For Advanced Diploma: when one A level required with some Diploma subjects and 2 are required for others (Specifications for combinations should be entered in “additional requirements” or “free text” box).
 - For Progression Diploma: when extra level 3 qualifications are required with some Diploma subjects and none required for others (specifications for combinations should be entered in “additional requirements” or “free text” box).
- **“Only when combined”**
 - When additional qualifications are required (additional qualification required should be specified in “additional requirements” box.).
 - For Advanced Diploma: ASL + Another level 3 qualification (not GCSEs).
 - For Progression Diploma: One level 3 qualification required (not GCSEs)
- **“Not accepted”**
 - There should be no further information in any of the other fields.

Subject controlled text

- Where possible, grade entered should correspond with points required (taking additional qualifications required into account).

Free text box

- Can include anything relevant to the Diploma subject, which cannot be accommodated in the controlled text (eg: Tariff point scores. Tariff should be one of: 100, 150, 200, 250, 300, 350 = Progression Diploma points).
- Should explain which Diploma subjects are acceptable only when combined if “On its own or in combination” has been specified.

ASL requirement box

- Ensure that a relevant level 3 qualification is in the ASL field.
- There should be nothing entered in this box for Progression Diplomas.
- Check that the ASL can be taken with the specified Diploma - check ASL catalogues.



- Grade/ Tariff scores can be entered alongside ASL qualification (check that the grades are appropriate for qualification).
- Entries such as “no specification”, “relevant level 3 qualification” are appropriate.

Additional requirements box

- Entries can be additional requirements (eg: music qualifications), or if “in combination”, the additional qualifications needed.

Other information box

- To be used for any other appropriate information (eg: contact details etc).

Appendix C

Suppression and rounding rules

Percentages have been rounded to whole numbers.

Negligible percentages which are greater than 0 but less than 0.5, and which would therefore be rounded to 0, are replaced with -.

Note that percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.